General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.157/PC/63/Add.15
21 April 1993

Original: ENGLISH

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 5

STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution by the International Council of Women

1. The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the statement submitted by the International Council of Women and nine other non-governmental organizations which seek to have the World Conference recognize that "women's rights are human rights".

2. These organizations request the World Conference to reaffirm the right of access of both women and men to reproductive health services, including family planning, as well as "the basic human right ... to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children" as included in the Proclamation of Tehran adopted by the International Conference on Human Rights in 1968.

GE.93-12920

Statement for the fourth Session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human rights

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, attach great importance to the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights, its deliberations and decisions. We note that the Preparatory Committee in its Fourth Session will be focussing on the draft of the final document and we wish to bring the following points to the attention of the Committee for inclusion in the final document of the Conference under agenda item 11 'Consideration of contemporary trends in and new challenges to the full realization of all human rights of women and men, including those persons belonging to vulnerable groups'.

We strongly recommend that the Conference document recognizes that 'women's rights are human rights'. Although women are subject to certain violations of their rights because they are women, as in the case of rape, domestic violence and reproductive health it is important that any violations of their rights should receive the same priority and have access to the same channels of redress as other violations of human rights.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of the individual to life, liberty and security of the person. Denial of a woman's reproductive rights can endanger her life thereby, depriving her of the right to life. As was recognized by the World Conference on Safe Motherhood (1987) half a million women die annually from conditions arising from pregnancy related causes.

We attach great importance to a woman's right to adequate health and well-being as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to 'the enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health' as set out in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Accordingly we recommend that the Conference document draws attention to the special needs of women within terms of their reproductive rights, which must include right of access to family planning and to other reproductive health services.

Signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and all regional human rights Conventions have agreed to ensure to all individuals human rights without distinctions such as sex.

Recognizing that discrimination against women contributes to their ill-health, States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women have agreed to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning'. (Article 12)

They have also agreed to take all appropriate measures 'to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women the same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to exercise these rights'. (Article 16(e))

Recognizing the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in eliminating the *de facto* discrimination against women and the opportunity for the full enjoyment of women's rights, including reproductive rights and the eradication of harmful traditional practices which negatively affect the reproductive health of women, we recommend that the Conference document will insist that the same level of implementation is applied to this Convention as is applied to other human rights instruments.

We earnestly trust that the Conference document will reaffirm the right of access of both women and men to reproductive health services, including family planning, as well as the 'basic human right . . . to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children' as was included in the Proclamation of Teheran (para. 16) at the International Conference on Human Rights in 1968. We also trust that the World Conference will recognize the need for appropriate implementation mechanisms to ensure that these important human rights are universally enjoyed through services which are voluntarily provided and which ensure free and informed consent and access to the widest possible range of services.

Signed by:

Category I

International Council of Women
International Federation of Business and Professional Women
International Planned Parenthood Federation

Category II

International Federation of University Women
International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples
Medical Women's International Association
World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
World Young Women's Christian Association

Roster

Centre for Development and Population Activities
Commonwealth Medical Association